

# God's Seal or the Beast's Mark?



## SABBATH—JUNE 9

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Genesis 17:9–11; Exodus 31:13, 17; Revelation 13:17; Ephesians 1:13, 14.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘The things You do are great and powerful. You are the All-powerful Lord God. You are always right and true in everything You do. You are King of all nations’ ” (Revelation 15:3, NLV).



God's true people announce the third angel's message to everyone on Earth.

**THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE LAMB** begins with words from this week's memory verse. This song will be sung by God's loyal people. They “are those [saved people] who have won their fight with the wild animal [that comes from the ground] and his false god and his mark [the special proof of his power]” (Revelation 15:2, NLV). How can we be part of that group?

One of the things that points to God's true people in the last days is the work they do. They announce the third angel's message to everyone on Earth. This message warns people not to get the “ ‘beast's [the wild land animal's] mark’ ” (Revelation 14:9, ERV). This warning is the most important warning in the whole Bible. But there are many confusing ideas about what this “mark” means.

We should not be surprised about these confusing ideas. After all, Babylon means “confusing” or “all mixed up.” (Babylon is a word picture in the Bible that describes churches in the last days that mix Bible truth with false teachings. The word picture Babylon also shows us the governments and religious powers that attack God's people in the last days.) This week we will try to understand better what the “beast's mark” means and how to not get it. Instead, we want to get God's “seal [the special proof of His power] on [our] foreheads” (Revelation 9:4, NIV).

**HOW CAN WE KNOW WHO GOD’S PEOPLE ARE?  
(Ezekiel 20:12, 20)**

**In the Old Testament, there were two ways to know who God’s true people were. One of those ways was circumcision. Circumcision was the act of cutting off the extra skin at end of the male sex organ. As Genesis 17:9–11 tells us, who did God give circumcision to?**

God commanded Abraham and all his future male children to be circumcised. To be circumcised means the extra skin at the end of the male sex organ is cut off. God commanded for all the males among His people to be circumcised eight days after birth (Leviticus 12:3). Circumcision had a deep meaning. God used it as a word picture to show His people their need for a new heart (read Deuteronomy 30:6). That is why Paul writes: “True circumcision is done in the heart. It is done by the Spirit, not by the written law. And anyone who is circumcised in the heart by the Spirit gets praise from God, not from people” (Romans 2:28, 29, ERV).

In the New Testament, circumcision is replaced by baptism (1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6; and Galatians 6:15). Baptism is a word picture for the new life we live because of Jesus. We die to sin and rise from the water to a new life (read Romans 6:3, 4). That is why Paul says circumcision is not important anymore. So, what things are now important? The important things now are love that comes from faith in Jesus and obeying God’s commandments.

**Read Exodus 31:13, 17 and Ezekiel 20:12, 20. As these verses show us, what was the second way to tell who God’s true people were? Why did God give humans this gift?**

God gave the Sabbath to humans when He finished making the heavens and the earth (read also Genesis 2:2, 3). The Sabbath started after God made everything. But circumcision started only with Abraham. That is why Jesus said, “ ‘the [Sabbath] Day of Rest was made for the good of man’ ” (Mark 2:27, NLV). The Sabbath shows us we belong to God. We belong to God because He made us. We belong to God because He saved us. He makes us right with Himself and makes us holy. He helps us obey. That is why keeping the Sabbath holy is important (read Hebrews 4:9).



**Baptism is a word picture for the new life we have because of Jesus. We die to sin and rise from the water to a new life (read Romans 6:3, 4).**

### THE WILD ANIMAL POWER FROM THE GROUND AND FALSE WORSHIP (Revelation 13:17)

Read Revelation 13:17; Revelation 14:9, 10; and Revelation 16:2. What happens to the “beast [the wild animal]” power that comes from the ground? What do these things teach us about why it is important to escape “the beast’s [the wild animal’s] mark [the special proof of his power]” (Revelation 14:9, ERV)?

What happens to people who get the “beast’s mark”? God’s anger against sin will fall on these evil people without any mercy. God will punish them with the “seven [last] troubles” (Revelation 15:8, ICB). In the end, God throws these evil people into “the lake of fire that burns with sulfur” (Revelation 19:20, NLV). What a difference between them and the people who refuse the “beast’s mark”!

What is the “beast’s mark”? The verses we read in the question above connect the “beast’s mark” with false worship. Remember how we learned in Daniel 7 that the fourth wild animal power from the sea would try to “change the times and laws” (Daniel 7:25, Nlrv)? This power also is the same power shown by the wild animal from the sea in Revelation 13. One law that this power would try to change is the Sabbath. The fourth commandment is the only law in the Ten Laws that points to time. The Sabbath also points to God as the One who “ ‘made the heavens, the earth, the sea and everything in them’ ” (Exodus 20:11, Nlrv).

The first angel’s message reminds us about the Sabbath law that the wild animal power that comes from the sea tried to change. The first angel’s message makes it clear to us that we must worship the Lord alone. Why? Because He made us. Seven verses talk about worship in Revelation 12–14. But Revelation 14:7 is the only verse in those chapters that is about true worship. The other six verses warn us not to worship the wild animal power that comes from the ground and his “false god” (Revelation 13:15, NLV). The third angel tells us what will happen to the people on Earth who worship this false god. Then right after that, God’s true worshipers are described in Revelation 14:12. They obey God’s law and have faith in Jesus.

In the end, everyone will belong to one of two groups: (1) people who follow God and obey the Sabbath. Or (2) people who worship the wild animal from the ground (the beast) and his false god (the Sunday sabbath).



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**PROOF WE BELONG TO GOD (Revelation 7:1–4)**

What is a seal? A seal is the same as signing your name to an important paper. Your name proves that the information on the paper is true. In the past, people used special stamps as seals that were almost the same as rubber stamps. People pressed the stamps onto melted wax tablets or wet clay tablets to show an agreement was true or that they owned something. Stamps gave agreements power.

**Read Ephesians 1:13, 14; Ephesians 4:30; 2 Timothy 2:19; Revelation 7:1–4; and Revelation 14:1. As these verses show us, what is God’s seal? How does God give His seal to His people? When does God give His people His seal?**

God’s seal shows that we belong to Him and are under His protection. In his letters, Paul talks about a “sealing time.” This time helps us understand the work God does to get us ready to live with Him. Paul shows a connection between (1) the sealing time and (2) a new life in Jesus and His gift to us of His Spirit. This gift is part of the riches Jesus promises to give His followers when He comes.

The book of Revelation also talks about a time of sealing that happens right before the Second Coming. God gives His final seal to His people during the latter rain. The latter rain is a word picture. It describes the time when God pours out His Holy Spirit on His people. At this time, God “writes” His name in the foreheads of His people. God’s name is His seal.

**What is the difference between God’s seal and “the beast’s [the wild land animal’s] mark [the special proof of his power]” (Revelation 14:9, ERV)?**

God’s seal is given to His true followers. The “beast’s mark” is given to people who worship “the beast.” The seal is given only in the forehead. This fact shows us that God’s followers choose to worship God. The mark is given either in the forehead or the hand. A mark in the forehead means people agree with “the beast” in their minds. A mark in the hand means people do not agree with “the beast.” But they follow “the beast” because they are afraid of what will happen if they do not obey it. People can buy or sell things only if they have the “beast’s mark.” People who do not have the “beast’s mark” will be killed (Revelation 13:17, 15).



**The latter rain is a word picture. It describes the time when God pours out His Holy Spirit on His people.**

**“THE BEAST’S MARK” (Revelation 14:9–12, ERV)**

The third angel warns us not to get the “beast’s [the wild land animal’s] mark [the special proof of his power]” (Revelation 14:9, ERV). What is this “beast’s mark”? As we learned already, the fourth animal power in Daniel 7 is the same as the wild animal power from the sea. This power would “try to change the times and laws that were given by God” (Daniel 7:25, NIV). One law this wild animal power that comes from the sea thought to change was the Sabbath commandment. The fourth commandment is the only commandment of God’s law that reminds us that God is the One who “made the heavens, the earth, the sea and everything in them. But he rested on the seventh day” (Exodus 20:11, NIV).

The first angel’s message also makes it clear: we must worship the Lord alone as the God who made us. The third angel warns us what will happen to people who worship the wild animal power that comes from the ground and his “false god” (Revelation 14:15, NIV) “that was made to look like the first wild animal” power that comes from the sea (Revelation 13:15, NIV).

**Read Revelation 14:12. What does this verse tell us that God’s loyal followers do? How does this information help us understand why the Sabbath is very important in the last days?**

Revelation 14:12 says: “God’s holy people must be patient. They must obey God’s commands and keep their faith in Jesus” (Revelation 14:12, ERV). “God’s commands” include the Sabbath. The Sabbath points to God as the One who made us and as the only God we should worship. No wonder many people believe that the “beast’s [the wild land animal’s] mark [the special proof of his power]” (Revelation 14:9, ERV) is connected to the coming test over Sunday worship. Sunday is a false “sabbath.” God did not command us in the Bible to worship on Sunday. God commands us to worship on the seventh day.

Does that mean Christians who worship on Sunday have the “beast’s mark” now? No. Revelation 13:15 tells us that people who refuse to join in this false worship will be killed. In the future, worship will become a life-or-death decision. That is not happening right now. The “beast’s mark” will not be given until the last test comes. But it has not come. That is why no one has the “beast’s mark” right now.



**The Sabbath points to God as the One who made us and as the only God we should worship.**

## THE SABBATH IS PROOF WE BELONG TO GOD (Hebrews 4:9, 10)

The seventh-day Sabbath shows us God's true people. God's people have always kept the Sabbath from Adam and Eve down to God's chosen people in Israel. The New Testament church also kept the Sabbath, starting with Jesus and His followers. God's last-day people also "obey God's commands and keep their faith in Jesus" (Revelation 14:12, ERV).

**Read Exodus 20:8–11 and Hebrews 4:9, 10. As these verses show us, why is the Sabbath so important? What special meaning does the Sabbath have for Christians?**

The Sabbath is found at the center of God's holy law. God gave the Sabbath to humans. It is God's seal. A seal is an object that proves a person owns something. It shows a person's power. God gave the Sabbath as proof of His power. A seal includes three things: (1) a person's name, (2) that person's kingdom, and (3) the reason for that person's power. God's Sabbath has all three parts of a seal: (1) The Sabbath seal gives us God's name: " 'the LORD your God' " (Exodus 20:10, NIV). (2) The Sabbath seal shows us the area that is under God's control: " 'the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them' " (Exodus 20:11, NIV). (3) God's seal also shows us the reasons for God's power: " 'In six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth . . . and rested on the seventh day' " (Exodus 20:11, NIV).

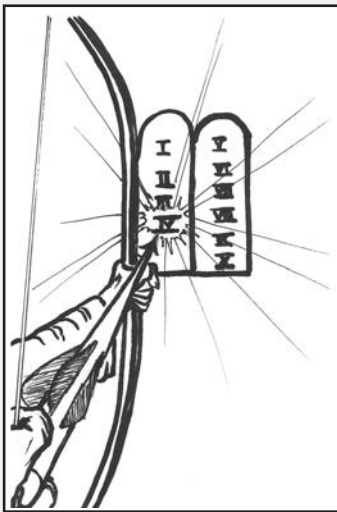
The New Testament says that God made all things by Jesus (John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1, 2). Jesus is the One who made our earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. When Jesus hung on the cross on Friday afternoon, He cried out: " 'It is finished!' " (John 19:30, NKJV). Jesus rested on the Sabbath after He died on the cross. So, the Sabbath has been blessed twice. First, it was blessed when Jesus made the earth. Second, the Sabbath was blessed when Jesus died on the cross. The book of Hebrews explains what our rest on the Sabbath means. It means that "God rested from his work. Those who enjoy God's rest [Sabbath] also rest from their works" (Hebrews 4:10, NIV). The Sabbath is a perfect word picture for showing us that we cannot save ourselves.

**The Sabbath is a word picture for resting from our works. What could you say Sunday is a word picture for?**

**"In six days  
the LORD made  
the HEAVENS,  
the EARTH...  
and RESTED  
on the SEVENTH  
DAY." Exodus 20:11**

The Sabbath is found at the center of God's holy law. God gave the Sabbath to humans. It is God's seal. God gave the Sabbath as proof of His power.

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “God’s seal is proof of His power. God’s people will be sealed in their foreheads. This seal cannot be seen. Instead, the wording ‘sealed in their foreheads’ is a word picture. It means God’s people will rest safely in the truth. They will strongly believe in God and His plan to save them. They will never turn away from the truth with their minds or in their spirits. God’s people must be sealed in their foreheads first. They must be sealed and ready for the shaking. [The shaking is a word picture. It explains the time when Christians will be tested. Everyone who is loyal to God will stay loyal to God. But there are false Christians who are not true to God’s law and are not right with God in their spirits. These false Christians will be “shaken out” of the truth and fall away from it.] The shaking will happen when God’s people are sealed and ready for it. In fact, the shaking has already started. God’s curses are already falling on this earth. God sends the curses to warn us about the things that are going to happen.”—Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, page 285; adapted.



“The Sabbath is the part of God’s law that Satan attacks and argues against the most.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great [big] Controversy [war between God and Satan]*, page 605; adapted.

“The Sabbath will be the most important test to prove our loyalty to God. The Sabbath is the part of God’s law that Satan attacks and argues against the most. The final test about the Sabbath shall come to every person on this earth. Then we will make a clear choice. All people can see who serves God and who does not. The government will make a law that forces everyone to honor Sunday as the day of rest. People who honor this false Sabbath are going against God’s fourth commandment. These people show that they are loyal to a power that is against God. People who keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy will show that they obey God’s law. They show they are loyal to the God who made them. The people who honor Sunday will get ‘the beast’s [the wild land animal’s] mark [the special proof of his power]’ (Revelation 14:9, ERV). But God’s loyal people will get God’s seal.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great [big] Controversy [war between God and Satan]*, page 605; adapted.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How can we share the truth about the “beast’s mark” in a loving way? Why is it important to be clear that no one has this mark now?
- ② How is the Sabbath connected to our being sealed with God’s Holy Spirit?